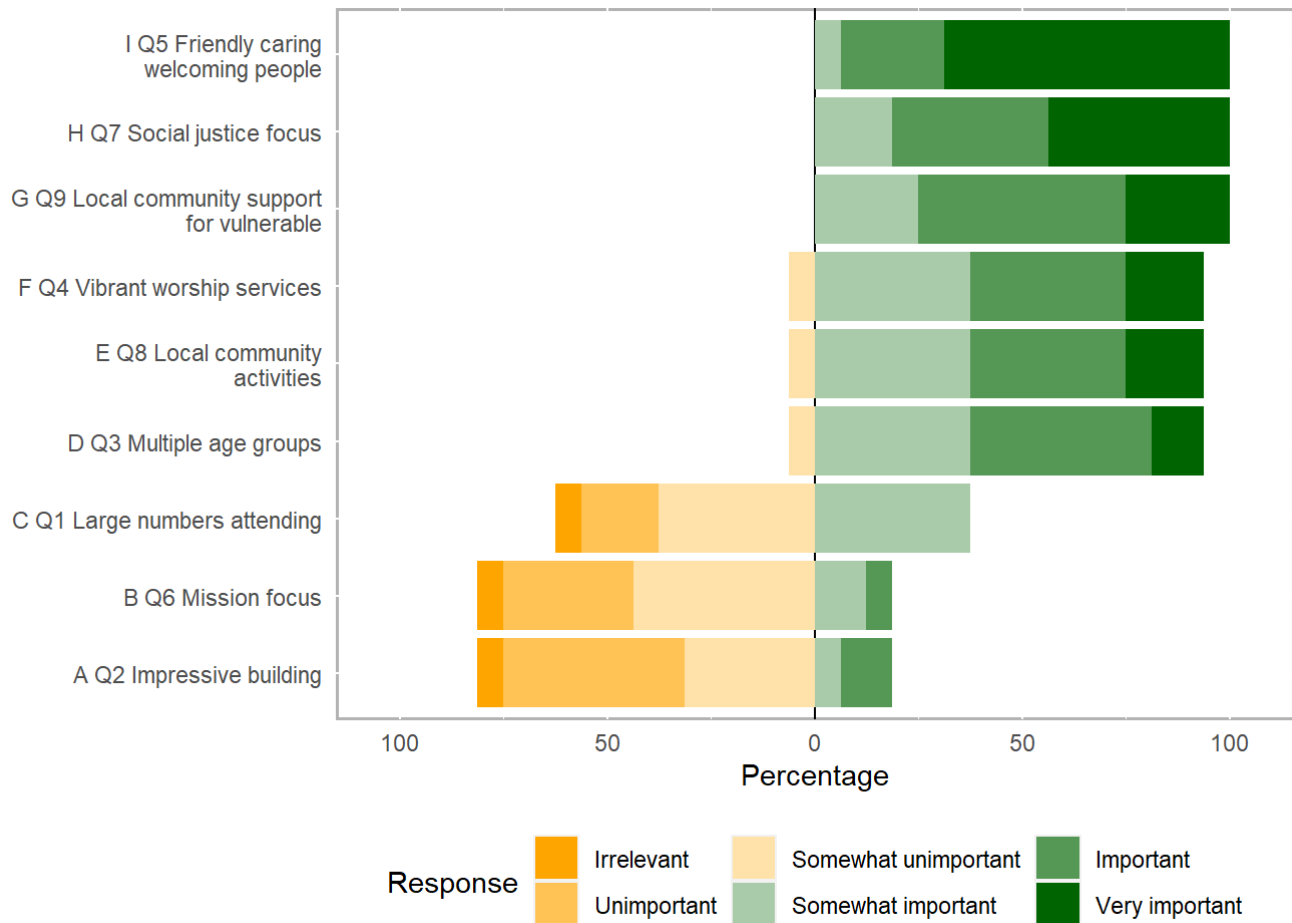


Characteristics of a successful church

This report presents the results of a survey of attendees of the Adelaide West Progressive Christianity group on the topic of *Characteristics of a successful church*. Survey responses were provided on paper forms from 16 attendees at the meeting held on 21 April 2021. Prior to answering the questions, the discussion leader presented ideas of why each characteristic may be regarded as important, citing examples of some other Adelaide churches.

The distribution of responses is summarised in the following figure.



The nine characteristics can be grouped into three classes according to the overall level of importance across the survey sample. This classification is based on the results shown above along with responses to the question which asked respondents to rank their three most important characteristics (results of ranking presented in the Appendix).

Group 1: Most considered highly important

- Church has friendly, caring people, welcoming all newcomers
- Church has a social justice focus, which includes care for creation and connection with those on the fringes of society

Group 2: Some considered highly important

- Church interacts with the local community by providing various support for the vulnerable and marginalised
- Church has vibrant worship services, informative preaching and Bible study groups
- Church interacts with the local community through non-religious activities
- Church attracts and serves multiple age groups

Group 3: Not considered important

- Large numbers of people attend the church's activities
- Church has a mission focus, supporting missionaries and evangelists both in Australia and overseas
- Church has an impressive, purpose-built building

Group 1: Almost two-thirds of respondents (10 out of 16) rated one of the Group 1 characteristics as their most important, and the same proportion included both of these characteristics in their top three most important. Overall, the characteristic 'Church has friendly, caring people, welcoming all newcomers' was rated the most important, with only two respondents (13%) not including this in their top three.

Group 2: Each of the four characteristics in Group 2 were almost unanimously considered at least somewhat important, however none of them featured prominently in the lists of the three most important characteristics. The figure above shows these four characteristics had a very similar distribution of response, and each characteristic was included in the 'three most important' list for at least one-quarter but no more than 38% of respondents.

Group 3: Each of the Group 3 characteristics were regarded as unimportant to some degree by more than half of the respondents. No respondents included 'large/impressive building' or 'large numbers' in their top-three list. The 'large/impressive building' characteristic had the greatest variation in opinion – while two respondents considered this an 'important' characteristic, almost half considered it as either 'unimportant' or 'irrelevant'.

Other characteristics

Five respondents provided responses to the final question which asked for suggestions of other characteristics they consider to be important. Somewhat remarkably, all of the suggestions were along the common theme of the church being open to people with different theological perspectives and willingness to update its theology on the basis of scientific evidence.

Appendix

Table: Responses to top-three most important characteristics

Characteristic	Most important	Top-3
Friendly caring welcoming people	6	14
Social justice focus	4	12
Local community support for vulnerable	3	6
Vibrant worship services	2	5
Local community activities	0	6
Multiple age groups	1	4
Large numbers attending	0	0
Mission focus	0	1
Impressive building	0	0